

Montana Kinship Navigator Program

Spring/Summer Newsletter

Looking Back to Move Forward

contribution by Brianna Routh, PhD., Jessica Hackett Graduate Research Assistant

The Montana Kinship Navigator Program (MTKNP), previously known as Montana Grandparents Raising Grandchildren was founded by Dr. Sandy Bailey in 2002. Dr. Bailey, Montana State University Extension Family & Human Development Specialist, was assessing family needs in Montana. She found that grandparents raising their grandchildren became a common theme. Sandy continued these efforts as a part of her job in Extension, continuing to help those in need of resources, education and support while raising grandchildren through peer support groups across the state.

Thanks to this solid foundation of outreach with kin caregivers, in 2019, the program was renamed and expanded to include relatives other than grandparents who are raising kin within our MTKNP services. MTKNP remains a part of Montana State University Extension with the support of both State and Federal partners. In addition to offering/facilitating/providing support groups and continuing to listen to the needs of kin caregivers, MTKNP has been able to provide direct support for information and referral to caregivers through our new warmline (accessible by phone, email, or webpage). During 2020-21, MTKNP has been able to offer financial and COVID-related resources to caregivers in need. Our program has expanded our ability to support other organizations used by kin caregivers through professional development and raising awareness for related resources through social media and regular partner updates.

While our team and services offered have grown over the years, our core mission of connecting caregivers of relative kin with the helpful, research-based information, peer support, and community resources remains. We are also pleased to have the continued support and expert insights of Dr. Bailey and her work contributing to the future efforts of MTKNP, even in retirement. To meet evidence-based program guidelines set out by our partners, and MTKNP is also partnering with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Generations United, and five (5) other state kinship navigator programs to coordinate and test the impacts of our services with kin families over the next three years, as well as project funding. Building this evidence-base will help us to ensure a sustainable and adaptable program for kin families across Montana and the country into the future. We're here to serve and support YOU!

Mental Health Moment:

Tips for Preventing Caregiver Burnout and Managing Stress by Alison van Schie (Caregiving.com)

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When I think of caregiver burnout I think of overwhelming stress that builds to the point of crippling exhaustion. I think of the pressure cooker analogy where steam continues to build and, if the venting valve is blocked, the cooker blows rendering it useless with a disastrous mess to clean. When a pressure cooker operates effectively, the pressure valve allows steam to be released regularly.

Caring for your loved one involves so much more than providing care; it includes your worries, anxieties, losses, anger, and guilt. It also includes your time, your energy, and often your finances. Caregiving needs can vary from support with daily activities and chores to more complicated levels of physical support and supervision (as is the case for dementia caregivers who are tasked with monitoring all activities for safety and to prevent wandering). All of these care scenarios can take their toll on you, dear caregiver.

I would not wish the pressure cooker situation on any family caregiver. Fortunately, it is entirely possible to prevent caregiver burnout and stress. By looking at each unique caregiving situation, we can identify where "steam" can be vented.

I recently asked a group of caregivers for their tips on preventing burnout. Perhaps one or more of their self-care strategies could apply to your life:

Be honest about your feelings – ask for help!	Take care of your health first (i.e. eat a healthy diet, get enough sleep, breathe deeply, monitor your own health, listen to your doctor, etc.).
Get out of the house and do something else; get away.	Join a support group either online or in person.
Participate in a fitness class.	Find respite care either formal or informal. Time away can help you better manage your stress and be a better caregiver.
Give yourself permission to take a break. This could mean not going to visit your loved one in care, or finding someone to stay with your loved one while you go out.	Find caregiver resources in your community, and access the ones that relate to your situation.
Follow your pre-COVID routine as closely as possible.	Let go of housework...read a book, make a phone call, take a bath, tinker in the garage, do whatever it is you like to do.
Pray or meditate. Listen to music.	And finally – focus on the good moments!

Are you providing care alone? Or are you so immersed in your caregiving that you are unable to modulate your worries? If you answered yes, it's time to ask for help. It can help to get someone else's perspective on your stress level. And it's more than okay to talk to someone about your innermost worries and feelings.

Your MTKNP Team:

Dr. Brianna Routh, PhD, Program Director
 Heidi Lester, M.Ed., Program Manager
 Lisa Curry, Evaluation Research Associate
 Jessica Hackett, Graduate Student Intern
 Kayleen Kidwell, Undergrad Student Intern

****If you would like printed versions of resources that may be hyperlinked (in blue), please contact Heidi Lester, 406-994-3395/mtknp@montana.edu, OR, you can also access full URLs at our website: <https://www.msuextension.org/mtknp/index.html>****

Food & Nutrition:

Contribution by Dr. Brianna Routh, PhD.

Anytime Pizza!

Contribution by Dr. Brianna Routh, PhD., Program Director

Get into the kitchen this month with a crowd pleaser- Pizza! Each family member can make their own. Try a new ingredient on your pizza- what about some garden herbs or fresh raspberries to give your pizza a new zing. This can include ALL food groups in the one stop winner of a meal.

(www.myplate.gov/recipes/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap/anytime-pizza)

Ingredients:

- 1/4 mini baguette or Italian bread (split lengthwise, or 2 split English muffins)
- 1/2 cup pizza sauce
- 1/2 cup mozzarella or cheddar cheese (part-skim, shredded)
- 1/4 cup green pepper (chopped)
- 1/4 cup mushrooms (fresh or canned, sliced)
- fruit or vegetable toppings (other, as desired, optional)

Directions:

1. Toast the bread or English muffin until slightly brown.
2. Top bread or muffin with pizza sauce, vegetables and low-fat cheese.
3. Sprinkle with Italian seasonings as desired.
4. Return bread to toaster oven (or regular oven preheated to 350 degrees).
5. Heat until cheese melts.

New Financial Assistance!

FCC Lifeline and Emergency Broadband Benefit Programs

contribution by Kayleen Kidwell, Student Intern

Lifeline: The FCC Lifeline program was implemented in 1985 to provide discounted phone services for qualifying consumers. Currently the program can provide qualifiers a discount up to \$9.25 a month off their bill. Additionally, if a consumer lives on a qualifying tribal land or qualifies for a tribal-specific program, they are eligible for a discount up to \$34.25 a month.

Emergency Broadband Benefit Program (EBBP): Meanwhile, the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program was implemented on May 12, 2021, due to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic. The EBB program provides a temporary discount up to \$50 a month for non-tribal consumers and up to \$75 a month for consumers that live on qualifying tribal lands and/or meet eligibility requirements for tribal-specific programs.

As of now, the program is set to run until six months after the US Department of Health and Human Services declares an end to the Coronavirus pandemic OR the program runs out of funds. To see if you and your family are eligible, or for more information, visit: **Lifeline** <https://www.fcc.gov/lifeline-consumers>; **Emergency Broadband Relief Program** <https://www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit>

Family Fun:

Summer Fun in the New Normal!

Contribution by Lisa Curry, Research Associate

The “new normal” created by the COVID-19 pandemic can make it hard to find fun activities for kids to enjoy during the summer months. While there are likely more activity options this summer than last summer, caregivers might still have to be a bit creative. Below are some ideas to keep kids entertained in the months ahead:

1. **Conduct a Science Experiment** – Learning can be fun for everyone! Try out a science experiment using household products, such as making lava - <https://sciencebob.com/try-some-lava-in-a-cup/>. There are a number of easy options on sciencebob.com and sciencefun.org.
2. **Have a Dance Party** – Clear a space to create a “dance floor” and work with your kiddos to create a fun, upbeat playlist of songs they (and you?) can dance to. Check out: <https://www.timeout.com/new-york-kids/things-to-do/best-dance-songs-for-kids> for song ideas.
3. **Run through the Sprinkler** – Some local pools might still be closed, or you might not feel safe bringing your kids there. When the days get hot and kids need to cool down, a hose and a sprinkler can be all you need.
4. **Have a Backyard Campout** – You don’t have to go far to give kids the joy and sense of adventure that sleeping outside can provide. Pitch a tent in the backyard or sleep under the stars while including any typical camping activities, like making s’mores and telling stories.
5. **Scavenger Hunt** – Create a list of items for the kids to find either inside the house, outside in nature, or both. For more ideas, check out: <https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/life/parenting/g32050844/scavenger-hunt-ideas-for-kids>

Sources: <https://www.verywellfamily.com/family-summer-activity-alternatives-during-covid-19-4846252> and <https://staywellhealth.org/news/118-6-covid-safe-family-activities-for-the-summer/>

Self-Care Check-In!

*A note from our Program Manager:
Unclench your jaw! Roll your shoulders!
Deep breath in (count of 5), breathe out
(count of 7)*

****NEW Website Launched!****

The vision for our new website was to be a “one stop shop” that meets needs and offers helpful resources in a timely way. Over the past few months, we have been intentional and thoughtful in the way we’ve designed our new website with all Montana kinship families in mind. Check it out! <https://msuextension.org/mtnkp/index.html>

Support Group Options:

MTKNP & Missoula Aging Services offers an online support group the 3rd Wednesday of the month from 12:30-1:30. **Questions? Call Kelly Moore**, MSU Ext. (Facilitator) at 406-258-4206 or email kmoore@montana.edu. Stay tuned to our [Facebook](#) page and [website](#) for more details – including registration.

Would having an hour or two to *yourself* help you keep stress at bay? Perhaps the MT Lifespan Respite Coalition is for you!

Please visit:

<https://dphhs.mt.gov/respite>,
or call Vicki at 1-800-224-6034

Montana Kinship Family Support Contacts By County

You can find many more parenting resources and Montguides on our website: <https://www.msuextension.org/mtknp/index.html>

Blaine County—Harlem & Fort Belknap Indian Reservation
Hillary Maxwell, MSU Extension, *currently running a support group*
(406) 353-2656

Big Horn County—Hardin
Holly Jay, MSU Extension
(406) 665-9770

Cascade County—Great Falls
Katrin Finch, MSU Extension, *currently running a support group*
(406) 454-6980

Tammy Phelps
Family Connections
(406) 761-6010

Chouteau County—Fort Benton
Janell Barber, MSU Extension
(406) 622-3036

Deer Lodge County—Anaconda
Kimberly Richardson, MSU Extension, *currently running a support group*
(406) 563-4035

Fergus County—Lewistown
Denise Seilstad, MSU Extension
(406) 535-3919

Flathead County—Kalispell
Grandfamilies of Montana, Inc. *~currently running a support group*
(406) 309-0816

Gallatin County—Bozeman
Heidi Lester, MSU Extension, *currently running a support group*
(406) 994-3395
mtknp@montana.edu

Glacier County—Browning & Blackfeet Indian Reservation
Zana L. McDonald, Eagle Shield Center, *currently running a support group*
(406) 338-7257

Hill County—Havre
MSU Extension,
(406) 265-5481
Currently co-running a support group with HRDC
Colleen White Wolf, HRDC
(406) 265-6743

Hill County—Rocky Boy's Indian Reservation
Beau Mitchell, Stone Child College & MSU Extension, *currently running a support group*
(406) 395-4875

Lincoln County—Troy
Jennifer Higgins, Troy Public Schools, *currently running a support group*
(406) 295-4321 ext. 1126

Mineral County—Alberton
AnnaMarie White, Owner, White Horse Forestry, INC, GAL, ICWA, QEW, La Paloma Agency, *currently running a support group*
(406) 396-1937

Missoula County—Missoula
Kelly Moore, MSU Extension, *currently running a support group*
(406) 258-4206
Alicia Crandall, Missoula Aging Services
(406) 728-7682

Pondera County—Conrad
Wendy Wedum, MSU Extension
(406) 271-4052

Richland County—Sidney
Carrie Krug, MSU Extension
(406) 433-1206

Roosevelt County—Culbertson
Ardis Oelkers, MSU Extension
(406) 787-5312

Roosevelt County—Fort Peck Indian Reservation
Carol Bemer, Fort Peck Tribe Tribal Elderly Program
(406) 768-2434

Rosebud County—Forsyth
Jennifer Anderson, MSU Extension
(406) 346-7320

Rosebud County—Lame Deer & Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation
Kay Medicine Bull, Boys & Girls Club of the Northern Cheyenne Nation
(406) 477-6654

Sanders County—Thompson Falls
Juli Thurston, MSU Extension
(406) 827-6934

Silver Bow County—Butte
Butte 4-C's
(406) 723-4019

Teton County—Choteau
Jane Wolery, MSU Extension
(406) 466-2492

Valley County—Glasgow
Roubie Younkin, MSU Extension
(406) 228-6241

Yellowstone County—Billings
Jackie Rumph, MSU Extension, *currently running a support group*
(406) 256-2828

~For more information about the Montana Kinship Navigator program in your area, answers to your questions, support, resources, local support groups, and any other help please contact your county support person listed inside. If your county is not listed, please contact The Montana Kinship Navigator Program at 406-994-3395 or mtknp@montana.edu.~



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**“Call it a clan, call it a network,
call it a tribe, call it a family.
Whatever you are, whoever you are.
You need one.”**